

Neglect of the *Nārada-pāñcarātra*

“Culturally Sensitive” Resolution

Only towards the fag end of the controversy, did the GBC executive committee requested an independent group of devotees to research the *Nārada-pāñcarātra*, on the scriptural validity or rarity of FDGs. However, the GBC and SAC deliberately neglected the group’s findings on the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*, in regards to the FDG topic because it was not fitting their pre-determined agenda. Ever since the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* verses were cited as strong evidence against the implementation of FDG, the SAC and GBC not only refused to accept the evidence but also arranged for one of its deputies to spread a lot of rumors and misconceptions regarding the authenticity of the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* within ISKCON circles. Nonetheless, the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* is an important part of the *pāñcarātra*, or *vaiṣṇava-tantri*ka scriptures. Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and Śrīla Prabhupāda have all referred to the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* verses in their writings in support of implementing a *daiva-varṇāśrama* society.

In its 2021 amendment to the 2019 Tirupati FDG resolution, the GBC introduced a novel concept: “culturally sensitive resolutions,” by which they have devised means to standardize many non-Vedic standards such as protection of women outside of Vedic norms. They cite and exploit certain temporary arrangements that Śrīla Prabhupāda made in the late 60’s such as *brahmacāriṇī aśramas* to justify all of their deviations under the umbrella of culturally sensitive resolutions. One such example is cited below:

Today’s GBC decision was denoted as a “Culturally Sensitive Resolution.” In short, ISKCON Regional Governing Bodies (such as the India Bureau) may, under specific conditions, choose to opt out of the policy for their area based on it being culturally sensitive. This is the first ever GBC resolution designated as culturally sensitive, under a law passed just a few weeks ago.

The GBC swiftly classified the FDG concept as a “culturally sensitive law,” when the law itself is not yet clearly defined.

More importantly, the GBC dismissed the India Bureau’s actual concerns against the FDG resolution—that FDG is against the scriptural injunctions and not a mundane cultural preference. The GBC exercises a dangerous epistemology that is not based on the teachings found in the books of ISKCON’s Founder-Ācārya.

To illustrate the dangers of such theological deviations let us consider a simple arithmetic expression: $2 \times 4 / 8 \times 2$. The answer varies depending on whether the equation is evaluated based on the left-to-right or the right-to-left sequence.¹ The left-to-right method of evaluation is the globally agreed sequence by all cultures of the world. Otherwise, even such simple mathematical equations would create confusion across different world cultures, especially in countries such as the Arab Nations or Japan, wherein predominantly the right-to-left method of reading is used. Hence, beyond doubt allowing FDG to be accepted or rejected based on “cultural sensitivity” is no different from allowing cultures across the world to employ their own preferred method of solving mathematical equations.

Nowhere in his teachings, does Śrīla Prabhupāda ever teach us about cultural sensitivity in ways other than uniting all of us under Kṛṣṇa culture, which is the culture based on *śāstra* as it is. The India Bureau tried to convey to the GBC, albeit unsuccessfully, that Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he wanted to spread the Vedic culture all over the world, not just in specific cultures:

“I want that on this Kṛṣṇa culture the whole world can be united.”
[Letter to: Syamasundara, Feb. 25, 1970, Los Angeles]

“So it is our mission. It is India’s culture. People are hankering after this culture, Kṛṣṇa culture. So you should prepare yourself to

¹ Furthermore the rules regarding mathematical operator precedence can further complicate the calculations..

present Bhagavad-gītā as it is. Then India will conquer all over the world by this Kṛṣṇa culture. Rest assured. But we are hankering after help from others.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda-lilāmrta » Vol 1 ch.33]

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted the whole world to adopt the traditional practices seen in his books as also practiced by our predecessor ācāryas, which is why he wanted his books translated into every language. The following excerpt is a good example that demonstrates his sharp focus, strong determination, and un-shakeable faith in Vedic culture and its superiority.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wore a coat Dr. Mishra had given him, but he never gave up wearing his dhotī, despite the cold, windy walks. Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna Mission had advised Prabhupāda that if he wanted to stay in the West he should abandon his traditional Indian dress and strict vegetarianism. Meat-eating and liquor, as well as pants and coat, were almost a necessity in this climate, he had said. Before Prabhupāda had left India, one of his Godbrothers had demonstrated to him how he should eat in the West with a knife and fork. But Prabhupāda never considered taking on Western ways. His advisors cautioned him not to remain an alien but to get into the spirit of American life, even if it meant breaking vows he had held in India; almost all Indian immigrants compromised their old ways. But Prabhupāda’s idea was different, and he could not be budged. The others may have had to compromise, he thought, but they had come to beg technological knowledge from the West. “I have not come to beg something,” he said, “but to give something.”²

The knowledge contained in the Vedic scriptures (including the *pāñcarātra* system of initiations) is universal, and not a creation of a particular mundane culture that the atheistic anthropologists (or devotees who associate with them too much) proclaim. The *pāñcarātra* system given by our previous ācārya Nārada Muni contains scriptural injunctions regulating

² Ch. 22: 15: “It Will Not Be Possible to Assist You,” Vol. 2: Planting the Seed: New York City 1965-1966, Śrīla Prabhupāda-lilāmrta – Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswāmī

dīkṣā that are equally applicable to all cultures world-wide, not just to the Indian culture:

Our, our system, culture is *varṇāśrama-dharma*. That is mentioned in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *catur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam, varṇa* [Bg. 4.13]. *Varṇa* means four sections: *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra*. That is real Vedic culture. That Vedic culture can be all over the world. Why in India? We are trying for that, to get the Vedic culture, which is acceptable by everyone. It is meant for everyone. [Conversation Aug. 7, 1971, London]

In Bg 4.15, Lord Kṛṣṇa defines dharma as: “*pūrvaiḥ pūrvataram kṛtām kuru karmaiva*” to just act as the ancients acted in the past. Having received from Śrīla Prabhupāda no clear mandate to implement anything other than *daivī-varṇāśrama-dharma* in ISKCON, through such invented concepts as FDG's, ISKCON has deviated from the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda into what one scholar has called “trackless deserts of nonsense.” The umbrella of “cultural sensitivity” acts as an innocuous cover for introducing anti-Vedic concepts such as GALVA (Gay And Lesbian Vaishnava Association) while simultaneously thwarting any introduction of *daiva-varṇāśrama* in countries outside of India.

The Socialism/Marxism resort

One of the senior disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda and a reputed scholar of ISKCON remarks:

Perhaps the most significant long-term result of this novel decision is the precedent it sets. Future generations will see (or eventually learn) that in this case the GBC essentially dismissed the many concerns long raised by various ISKCON gurus, GBC members, sannyāsīs, and devotee scholars – after refusing to substantially discuss those concerns through explicit references to *guru-sādhu-śāstra* – as per the traditional convention taught and shown in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

Thus future devotees will also infer that it was somehow acceptable for ISKCON's institutional authority to enact laws contrived independently of *sabda-pramāṇa*.

The actual problem is atheism, infected by the pervasive Marxist ideals that have been deliberately injected into the parent society with which most ISKCON members maintain their most numerous daily associations. But these devotees can't yet see this, because they are mostly the kind of neophytes that ISKCON's own Marxist leaders prefer to keep in ignorance in order to exploit.

The point is that as soon as western ideals and education were instituted in India, they produced a rebellious generation that ultimately ousted those who taught them.³ Is that an example the GBC wants to repeat now in ISKCON – [or] is there some specific reason it now expects to get a different result? It seems deliberate, but it will backfire – the GBC will ultimately just create its own enemies. And that sounds an awful lot like an unauthorized theological deviation.

SAC's misinterpretations

In all of its FDG resolutions and amendments to date, it appears that the GBC relied solely on SAC for the research and analysis of the FDG topic. In their 2021 amendment they claim:

The GBC accepts the philosophical conclusion presented in the SAC's Female Diksa Guru Paper that a mature, qualified, female devotee may accept the role of an initiating spiritual master. – [cited from the GBC's 2021 amendment resolution]

However, in all of its research papers on FDG to date, the SAC has not only repeatedly failed to present the truth or to conduct basic research on the *pāñcarātra sāstras* but also severely misled the GBC and the devotee community through artificially forced speculations, as will be established in the following passages.

On page 3 of their 2013 paper, the SAC authors mention that standard *vaiṣṇava-sāstras* such as the *Bhāgavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* do not make gender distinctions, as cited below:

It is important to remember that Vaiṣṇava views of the guru qualification markedly depart from those of varṇāśrama,

³ See: <https://tinyurl.com/3zad36wm>

singling out devotion to Kṛṣṇa as the only prerequisite even for an outcaste to act as a spiritual master. In highlighting this qualification, standard Vaiṣṇava śāstras such as the Bhāgavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam do not make gender distinctions.

[1][2]

The above claims are totally ambiguous and inaccurate—and remain unsubstantiated. First of all, Vaiṣṇavas accept all *vaiṣṇava-śāstras* whether they are of the Vedic or the *pāñcarātra* origin. Certainly *Bhāgavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are part of the gamut of the Vedic śāstras and are not classified as “*vaiṣṇava-śāstras*” because all the followers of all branches of the Vedas accept *Bhāgavad-gītā* and there are many commentaries of *Bhāgavad-gītā*. Although the vaiṣṇava view of one’s varṇa (based on quality and occupation) markedly departs from the smārtas views of *varṇāśrama* (based on birth alone), both systems agree that to become a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu requires no class or gender discriminations. The verse *mām hi pārtha ...* (9.32) from *Bhāgavad-gītā* confirms this statement. But neither *Bhāgavad-gītā* nor *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* make any statements about females becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*. So, the authors of 2013 SAC paper confuse or distract the audience by spurious reasoning and dis-jointed logic. Displaying a bodily prejudice, some of the SAC members and former associates were severely critical of the śāstric evidence cited against the FDG from the *vaiṣṇava-śāstras* like the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṃhitā*, depicting it as unauthentic. In the following sections we will refute those dubious claims based on *śāstra-sādhu-guru-vākyas*.⁴

Distortion of Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṃhitā

In his book, refuting the evidence from the *Bharadvāja-saṃhitā* against FDG, the GBC deputy and former SAC member Madan

⁴ *Vākyas* in sanskrit means statements. Hence forward, we use the compound *śāstra-sādhu-guru-vākyas* to indicate the alignment of statements of the saintly persons (*sādhus*) and the statements of the spiritual master (*guru*) with the scripture (*śāstra*) as the central pivot.

Mohan Das claims that the *Bharadvāja-samhitā* is inapplicable to ISKCON because it prescribes *varṇa* by birth. However, this is his speculation, which will be established in the latter parts of this writing. If this scripture were not authoritative for devotees, why would Śrī Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa quote the *Nārada Pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-samhitā* verse 1.44 in his works as applicable for vaiṣṇavas? Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī also quoted that the *Nārada Pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-samhitā* as the scripture that vaiṣṇavas should follow for intiations or *dikṣā*. In his purport to SB 4.31.10, Śrīla Prabhupāda states explicitly that the *Bharadvāja-samhitā* is an authorized scripture in topics related to establishing *vaiṣṇava-dikṣā* processes. The *Bharadvāja-samhitā* may refer to *varṇa* by birth but once *saṁskāras* are re-established in the proper *diava-varṇāśrama* setup, the *śāstras* and Śrīla Prabhupāda advocate determining *varṇa* by birth.

A person born in the Brahmana family, if he is well-qualified with the brahminical qualities, it is very very good, welcome.⁵

Despite these explanations, anyone continuing to deride and criticize Bharadvāja Muni and the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-samhitā*, appears to be guilty of *śruti-śāstra-nindanam* (criticism of the Veda or its corollary scriptures), which is one of the ten offences to the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa listed in the *padma-purāṇa*.⁶

More misrepresentations of the *Bharadvāja-samhitā*

Madan Mohan Das also claimed that the *Bharadvāja-samhitā* is an obscure scripture and that following its injunctions against FDGs is but a step away from allowing only Indian-born *brāhmaṇas* to become *dikṣā-gurus* in ISKCON. However, such statements only directly counter the statements given by our own *ācāryas*, and are nothing but blasphemy of scriptures.

5 Letter to G.L.Nanda, June 14, 1975: <https://tinyurl.com/4m6uh28r>

6 For more information on the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-samhitā*: “Vaiṣṇava-dikṣā according to *Nārada-pāñcarātra*, Can a Female Devotee be a *dikṣā-guru*?”, Bhakti Vikas Trust, 2019;” <https://archive.org/download/VDNAP>

Contrary to these so-called scholarly opinions, we find many statements in other *pāñcarātra* texts such as the *Pādma-saṁhitā*, *Parama-saṁhitā*, *Īśvara-saṁhitā*, *Jayakhya-saṁhitā* etc. that directly supplement and elaborate on these statements of the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*. Hence, the verses of the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* with reference to *ācārya-lakṣaṇam*, or the characteristics of the spiritual master (1.37–1.44) are fully supported and detailed in all of the abovementioned *saṁhitās* and other *pāñcarātra-saṁhitās*. For instance, the *Pādma-saṁhitā* contains clear statements about who does and doesn't have the *adhikāra* (prerogative) to become a spiritual master.⁷ After going through the relevant sections of all these other *pāñcarātra-saṁhitās*, one will see that the position of the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* on the topic of *dīkṣā* is not only succinct and clear but also gives direct answers (in the form of both rules and exceptions) to ISKCON's important questions regarding FDGs.

Risk of rejecting the *pāñcarātra* system

Furthermore, the GBC's pro-FDG camp takes the position that the *pāñcarātra* system was introduced by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura only in recent times, and before that the Gaudiya-vaiṣṇava community did not follow the *pāñcarātra* or the *vaidika* system such as the practice of wearing of the sacred thread. They claim this as evidence to show that the *vaidika* system's rituals such as wearing the sacred thread, or other *pāñcarātra* system of initiation, are not permanent fixtures of *Gaudiya-vaiṣṇava-sampradāya*. They also claim the practice of FDGs on other *Gaudiya* branches outside of the branch given by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura as a valid precedence for the implementation of FDG within ISKCON. Using these arguments as basis they conclude that FDG/WDG/VDG implementation need not be constrained by *pāñcarātra* or *vaidika* system. What can be said of such postions other than to be concerned about their misfortune of having removed

⁷ *Pādma-saṁhitā* 24.23 and 24.24 matches with *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* 1.37-43

themselves far away from the mercy of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and in turn offending Śrīla Prabhupāda? Neither following the *vaidika* system of *daivi-varṇāśrama* nor following the *pāñcarātra* system of *prapatti*, historical records reveal that many sects within the Gauḍīya community ended up as *prakṛtha-sahajīyas* (materialistic sentimentalists).

Looking at the long of history (more than 1000 years) of Śrī-vaiṣṇava practices of *bhara-nyāsa saṁskāra*, we can find that although even young children could get these *saṁskāras*, girls were not awarded these initiations until they had their *vivāha-saṁskāra*, or marriage ceremony performed. The reason for this is mainly to observe the injunctions of *varṇāśramadharma* which state that the first *saṁskāra* or spiritual initiation ceremony for a boy is to get his *upanayana* (at his 8th, 10th, 12th years depending on his *varṇa*), and the first *saṁskāra* of spiritual initiation for a girl is performed via her marriage to a suitable boy.

In various *purāṇas*, we find numerous evidences from history and tradition in which Śrī Nārada Muni, the author of the *Nārada-pāñcarātra*, delivered, and changed those born as hunters such as Mṛgāri and Vālmīki, into great sages, just as he delivered Dhruva Maharāja born as a *kṣatriya*, by initiating them into the *pāñcarātra* system.

The Eye of “Śāstra” – Refuting FDG arguments

Overview – Content Refutations

In this writing, we refute two main books of the pro-FDG camp, published in last two decades, and clarify several misconceptions propagated by these publications about the validity of FDG and the *Bhāradvāja-samhitā*. The first part refutes the conclusions of the book¹ published under the series “Eye of the storm,” by Kaunteya Dāsa, a GBC office bearer; a book considered to be a comprehensive manual endorsing FDG. In the next part we refute the conclusions of another book² written by Madana-mohana Dāsa, a devotee-scholar serving as a deputy to the GBC office at the time of this writing, targetting the findings of an independent group of devotees on the *Nārada-pañcarātra Bharadvāja-samhitā* verses (1.37 – 44).

During the 2019 GBC annual and mid-year general body meetings, especially the one held at Tirupati in October 2019, those supporting the Women or female *dīkṣā-gurus* (WDG/FDG/VDG) issue, quoted heavily from Kaunteya Dāsa’s book eventually resulting in the GBC body passing the FDG resolution by a small majority (54%). However, several members of ISKCON are skeptical about the authenticity of statements made in this book that played a crucial role in such a major decision, and hence are concerned that it is likely to affect the future course of the entire movement. This writing, is aimed at researching the statements contained in these books to verify the veracity of its constructs adopted by these authors.

The symptoms of Kali-yuga as described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, cited below, are:

A person’s spiritual position will be ascertained merely according to external symbols, and on that same basis people will change from one spiritual order to the next. A person’s propriety will be seriously questioned if he does not earn a good living. And

1 “Did Śrīla Prabhupāda Want women dīkṣā-gurus? Eye of the storm,” a book by Kaunteya Dāsa: <https://tinyurl.com/ycty4crv>

2 Guru: The Principle, Not the Body – by Madana-mohana Dāsa, 2020

one who is very clever at juggling words will be considered a learned scholar. [SB 12.2.4]

A sacred place will be taken to consist of no more than a reservoir of water located at a distance, and beauty will be thought to depend on one's hairstyle. Filling the belly will become the goal of life, and **one who is audacious will be accepted as truthful.** He who can maintain a family will be regarded as an expert man, and the principles of religion will be observed only for the sake of reputation. [SB 12.2.6]

After going through these two books (about 290 odd pages each) it was determined that it would be an over endeavor to refute each and every discrepancy of these books since there are just too many. First and foremost, there are audacious claims made by these authors that their research of the entire ocean of the Vedic scriptures or *śāstras*, finds “no prohibition for women becoming an *ācārya*,” contrary to the evidence from the *pāñcarātra* scriptures, presented in earlier sections, refuting this claim. Another observation gained from our study of the books in question, is that there are indications of serious discrepancies: little or no basis on *śāstra-vākyas*, the authors severely lacking experience in Vedic culture, non-alignment of *śāstra-vākyas*, *sādhu-vākyas*, *guru-vākyas*, plenty of evidence of deliberate violation of scholarly norms and lexical sleight of hand on top of word jugglery and selective quoting.

All efforts are employed to keep the focus of this refutation on addressing the issues, and not allowing room for any direct or perceived ad-hominem. Nonetheless, the policy is to base all observations on *śāstra-sādhu-guru-vākyas*, and call a “spade a spade.” One may wonder whether it is prudent to dedicate a writing to condemnation and refutation. Well, let us consider a verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, canto 6, chapter 8 titled, “The *Nārāyaṇa-kavaca* Shield” [SB 6.8.19]

<i>dvaipāyano bhagavān aprabodhād pramādāt kalkīḥ kaleḥ kāla-malāt prapātu</i>	<i>buddhas tu pāṣāṇḍa-gaṇa- dharmāvanāyoru-kṛtāvatārah</i>
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May the Personality of Godhead in His incarnation as Vyāsadeva protect me from all kinds of ignorance resulting from the absence of the Vedic knowledge. May Lord Buddhadeva protect me from activities opposed to Vedic principles and from laziness that causes one to madly forget the Vedic principles of knowledge and ritualistic action. May Kalkideva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who appeared as an incarnation to protect religious principles, protect me from the dirt of the Age of Kali.

Hence, absence of the Vedic Knowledge, absence of practice of Vedic culture and tradition, performance of activities opposed to the Vedic principles, and attacks on the religious principles create great calamities for the devotional lives of devotees. Hence, it is the duty of every devotee of the Lord to seek protection through the *Nārāyaṇa-kavaca* shield from any attack on Vedic culture and scriptural injunctions. Moreover, had these books been refuted earlier on, so many innocent devotees, especially in the West, would have had opportunities to know the truth and not perpetuate unscrupulous ideas amongst their congregation.

*yei grantha-kartā cāhe sva-mata sthāpīte
śāstrera sahaja artha nahe tānhā haite*

[Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī said] Anyone who wants to establish his own opinion or philosophy certainly cannot explain any scripture according to the principle of direct interpretation. [Cc Madhya 25.49]

The book by Kaunteya Dās (project co-ordinator) has indeed created a storm in the ISKCON devotee community ever since it was published back in 2013. At the time of its publication, this book was the first of its kind in terms of compiling and presenting all the viewpoints on the topic in an apparent balanced manner. Nonetheless, after a span of nine years (better late than never) it is important for the devotee community of ISKCON to review the contents of this book through the eye of *śāstra*, *sādhu*, and *guru* instead of looking at it through the “eye of the storm.”

Another important aspect to note is that the book, “Eye of the storm,” does not list the names and credentials of the author(s) but instead lists Kaunteya Dās as the Project-co-ordinator. Hence, in reference to refutation of that book, Kaunteya Dās along with the content producers and publishers are all together listed as the author(s).

Several ISKCON GBCs, leaders, senior devotees, and neutral observers have relied on the above-mentioned authors' respective publications, among other research works, for researching the veracity of FDG. Hence, this writing, refuting the ideas presented in these books, is intended to serve these ISKCON devotees and leaders with insights based on *śāstra-sādhu-guru-vākyas* about the quality of research and veracity of the contents of these books. In this way it is hoped that they will get an opportunity to reconsider their own opinion on this most contentious issue in light of *śāstra-pramāṇa*.

The common feature of all FDG related research projects conducted to date (SAC 2005, 2013 papers, the above-mentioned books, and other research works) that have taken a pro-FDG stand is that despite ISKCON following *pāñcarātrika-dīkṣā* practices, they have all totally neglected to research the *pāñcarātra* scriptures. Since *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*, which contains the most important evidence on this topic, was not even mentioned in these research projects, it appears that the pro-FDG researches are bound to be speculative by design. Despite the clue given by Śrila Prabhupāda in his purport to SB 4.31.10 to find more quotations from the *Nārada-pāñcarātra Bharadvāja-saṁhitā*, it is baffling that the pro-FDG stand continues to neglect and attempt debunk this scripture as irrelevant.

In the following sections of this writing, we refute some of the fundamental arguments and counter-arguments featured in the aforementioned pro-FDG books. A recurring pattern of scholarly lapses that are common in the arguments presented in these pro-FDG books are:

- The lack of *śāstra-pramāṇa* (scriptural evidence) to support FDG.
- A fundamental fallacy due to a misconstrued understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words as divorced from *śāstras*, or as stand alone *mūla-pramāṇa* independent of *śāstras*.
- Failure to research the *Bharadvāja-saṁhitā* (NP-BS or just BS herein after) or any other *pāñcarātra* scriptures and all aspects of the *pāñcarātra-dikṣā* including and not limited to female *dikṣā-gurus*.

No *śāstra-pramāṇa* supporting FDG/WDG

It is evident that neither the author(s) of the pro-FDG publications, nor the GBCs with a pronounced pro-FDG stand, nor the SAC committee, which published its last paper in 2013 on this subject, presented any scriptural evidence for the sanction of female *dikṣā-gurus* from *śāstras*. When asked to produce appropriate *śabda-pramāṇa* that supports FDG implementation, all that these researchers with a pro-FDG stand could muster were merely *aitihya* or Gauḍīya traditions divorced from *śāstras*, and that too presenting exceptional personalities like Jāhnavā-devī as the precedence for institutionalizing the FDG in ISKCON. In the following sections of this writing we will demonstrate through examples of how the authors of the above-mentioned books have come up with very strange concoctions as *śāstra-pramāṇa* to support FDG, – cherry picking *Brahma-saṁhitā* verses, one of the authors states that our *saṁpradāya* preceptor, Lord Brahmā, had his wife Mother Sarasvatī as his female *dikṣā-guru*, while the other author extrapolates *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verses to claim that Mother Rukminī had many female *dikṣā-gurus* since she had received mantras from learned women (wives of *brāhmaṇas*). The latter part of this writing will discuss these points in detail, and refute them based on scriptural references. In fact, whatever these authors have provided as evidence for FDG’s only exposes

their total lack of knowledge of the *pāñcarātra* scriptures related to *vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā*.

Despite us pointing out this serious lapse of *śabda-pramaṇa*, the highest authority among proofs, the leaders with a pronounced pro-FDG stand have continued, to date, to refuse to accept this scriptural evidence provided against the proposed female *dīkṣā-gurus* system. Demonstrating relentless fanaticism, the pro-FDG camp has only managed to coerce the GBC into passing novel resolutions such as allowing each ISKCON regional or national council to use mundane “cultural context” as an authority to either accept or reject FDG implementation within their jurisdiction.

This demonstrates that the result of considering Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words as divorced from *sādhu-sāstra-vākyas* or considering it superior to *sāstra-vākyas* contributes to spurious misinterpretations of his otherwise direct verdict on this topic, presented in his purport to SB 4.12.32.

Overall Summary:

Now that ISKCON has enforced FDG implementation it is likely that it will lead the organization into a nasty multi-fragmented schism. Historical evidence of a Śrī-sampradāya schism³ shows us that the effect of not reconciling the philosophical differences on contentious issues through healthy discussions based on scriptures, leading to a permanent irreconcilable divide amongst devotees. About 45% of ISKCON’s members are convinced that FDG implementation is not authentic because:

1. No scriptural evidence presented by the proponents of FDG/WGD supports this idea. At best, they provide a few irrelevant or unrelated incidents from history in lieu of actual *sāstra-pramaṇa*.
2. Manipulation of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s selected statements, as divorced from *sādhu-sāstra-vākyas*, and providing spurious

³ “Schism in the Śrī Vaisnava Sampradāya,” Śridhara Śrīnivāsa dāsā: <https://tinyurl.com/3r7bxuxt>

misinterpretations to dismiss his direct verdict on this topic presented in his purport to SB 4.12.32 as being irrelevant.⁴

3. FDG proponents have deliberately neglected the śāstric evidence against FDG from the *Bhāradvāja-samhitā*, and deliberately thwarted the harmonization of all statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda, on this topic concerning the authenticity of the *Bhāradvāja-samhitā*.

Over and above, experts from other *vaiṣṇava-sampradāyas* have cautioned ISKCON about lack of *śāstra-pramāṇa* and lack of *śiṣṭācāra* by Śrīla Prabhupāda with regards to implementation of FDG.

⁴ Presented in his books, lectures, private conversations, and correspondences.

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